

We claim:

1. An overload control method for use in a multi-branch Internet Protocol (IP)-based private branch exchange (PBX) system within a network environment having a primary network and at least one alternate network, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining a congestion indicator status associated with each path in said primary network, said congestion indicator status indicating whether said path is congested and based on congestion data from at least one device that participated in a packet telephony communication;

receiving a call set up request from a source terminal;

determining if a primary path between said source terminal and a destination terminal is congested using said congestion indicator status; and

routing said call using said at least one alternate network if said primary path between said source terminal and a destination terminal is congested.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of setting a timer that will cause said congestion indicator flag to automatically expire after a predefined period of time.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said timer expires after a period of time within which said congestion should have been alleviated.

4. A congestion management method for use in an Internet Protocol (IP)-based private branch exchange (PBX) system within a packet network environment, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving congestion data from at least one device that participated in a packet telephony communication;

determining if said congestion data indicates that a path associated with said packet telephony communication is congested; and

setting a congestion indicator flag associated with said path if said congestion data indicates that a path associated with said packet telephony communication is congested.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of setting a timer that will cause said congestion indicator flag to automatically expire after a predefined period of time.

5 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said timer expires after a period of time within which said congestion should have been alleviated.

7. A congestion management method for use by a packet phone adapter (PPA) in a packet network environment, said method comprising the steps of:

collecting congestion data associated with a packet telephony communication;

determining if said packet telephony communication had a duration that exceeded a predefined threshold; and

reporting said congestion data to a centralized server that performs overload control, whereby said centralized server evaluates said congestion data to determine if a path associated with said packet telephony communication is congested.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of setting a timer that will cause said congestion data to automatically expire after a predefined period of time.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said timer expires after a period of time within which said congestion should have been alleviated.

10. A congestion manager for use in an Internet Protocol (IP)-based private branch exchange (PBX) system within a packet network environment, comprising:

a memory for storing computer readable code; and

a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to:

receive congestion data from at least one device that participated in a packet telephony communication;

determine if said congestion data indicates that a path associated with said packet

telephony communication is congested; and

Sh ~~set~~ a congestion indicator flag associated with said path if said congestion data indicates that a path associated with said packet telephony communication is congested.

11. The congestion manager of claim 10, wherein said processor is further configured
5 to maintain a timer that will cause said congestion indicator flag to automatically expire after a predefined period of time.

12. The congestion manager of claim 11, wherein said timer expires after a period of time within which said congestion should have been alleviated.

10